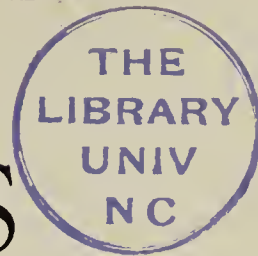


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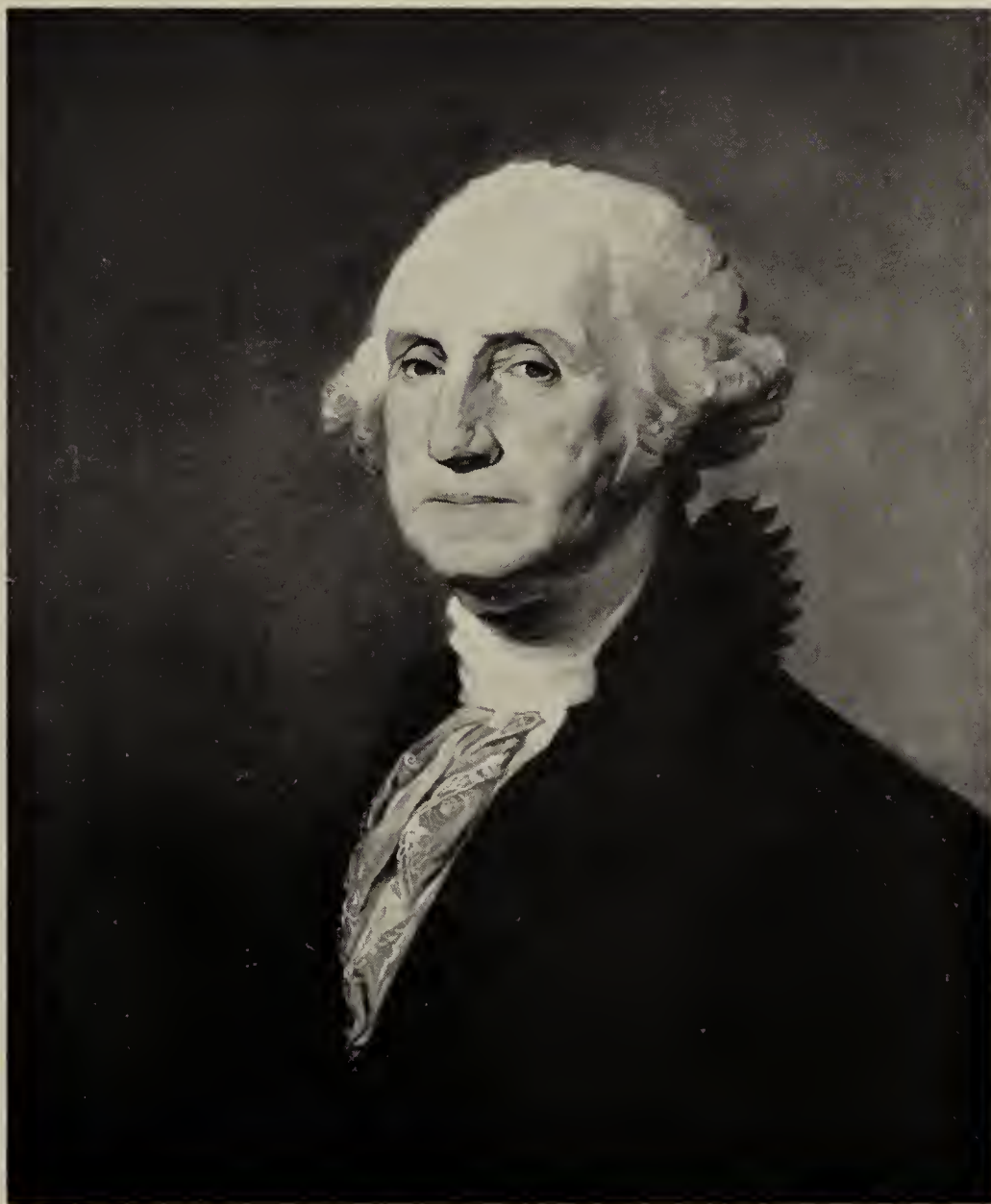
MUSEUM NEWS

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

NUMBER 75

TOLEDO, OHIO

JUNE, 1936



GEORGE WASHINGTON

GILBERT STUART

GIFT OF ARTHUR J. SECOR



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EDITOR: BLAKE-MORE GODWIN, M. A., DIRECTOR, THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

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Art is that science whose laws applied to all things made by man make them most pleasing to the senses.

George W. Stevens.

EDITORIAL

THE Museum has closed its educational activities for the season. They have been a substantial contribution to the cultural life of Toledo, and have been duly appreciated.

We do not conduct an educational program in the summer months for good and substantial reasons.

But this is not a discussion of things not done.

Our point now is that while our activities have ceased, the Museum remains open every day, and visitors are always welcome.

In fact, the summer is a good time to really get acquainted with the Museum and its contents.

Then there are few, if any, distractions. No lecture group fills the gallery you came especially to see. No class clusters around and hides from view the one picture you wanted to show your guest. The visitors are pretty well distributed over the entire building.

The Museum's collections are all on view, save a few works which have been loaned for exhibition elsewhere. In addition, there is an interesting showing of contemporary American paintings.

Take advantage of these conditions to visit the Museum when your mind need not be on the class, the lecture, or the concert of the moment, and when you may enjoy a picture or a group of objects undistracted by more pressing demands and insistent ideas.

OUR STUART PORTRAIT OF WASHINGTON

MUCH of Gilbert Stuart's fame rests upon his portraits of George Washington, who was fortunate to have as what might be called his official portraitist a man of such capacity. It is not often that this rare combination has existed. The countenance of many a great man has been fixed upon canvas only by those of most mediocre talents. Such pictures may be treasured only for their historic interest, and hence have no place in a museum of art. The best of the Stuart Washingtons, however, may claim their position in the galleries without regard to subject.

The Toledo Museum is most fortunate in having as the gift of Arthur J. Secor a splendid example of Stuart's artistry, which is at the same time a magnificent representation of the Father of his Country. It has recently been lent to the new Dallas Museum of Fine Arts for exhibition there this summer in connection with the Texas Centennial Exposition. As it has not been published heretofore in these columns, or elsewhere as far as we know, the lending prompts us to present it in this issue of the Museum News.

Stuart is believed to have painted but three portraits of Washington from actual sittings. They are of distinct types. The first, a bust showing the right side of the face, known as the Vaughan portrait, was painted in Philadelphia in September, 1795.

Stuart's second portrait of Washington was a full-length standing figure done in April, 1796, known as the Lansdowne Washington.

Later in the same year Stuart did still a third portrait of Washington, a bust showing the left side of his face. This Stuart never wholly finished, but retained in his studio. After his death it passed into the possession of the Boston Athanaeum.

These three portraits, and especially the last, form the basis for a vast number of replicas and copies. How many Stuart himself did, and how many of them remain, is unknown. One author¹ has listed one hundred twenty-four now extant. There were probably once, and even yet may be, many more.

The one now in the Toledo Museum came from Eliza Inskeep Brooks Waterworth who received it from her uncle, Henry Brooks, in 1887. He had inherited it from his mother Eliza Inskeep Brooks who in turn had acquired it in the division of the effects of her father, John Inskeep, its first owner, who died in 1834. John Inskeep had been Mayor of Philadelphia in 1800-1801 and again in 1804-1805.

So direct a chain of title is ample evidence for Stuart's authorship. However, in the case of this picture, such evidence is not necessary. The painting itself bespeaks Stuart's hand in every

brush-stroke. It is unsigned as are most of his works, for when he was once asked why he did not mark his pictures with a signature or his initials, he replied, "I mark them all over." As he removed from Philadelphia to Washington in 1803, the picture was probably executed between 1800 and 1803. Fortunately it has never suffered the cleanings, restorations and repaintings to which so many of Stuart's pictures were subject. It retains all the freshness and brilliancy which the artist imparted to it.

In not all of Stuart's work—and this is particularly true of the Washingtons—do we see so felicitous a handling. The portraitist is not always inspired by his sitter, and when a subject is repeated as often as was the Washington it cannot fail to pall at times. Some, however, such as the one under consideration, establish his right to be ranked as the greatest of the early American painters and to be rated among his contemporaries, the English portraitists, as inferior only to Gainsborough and Reynolds. His nearest affinity among them is perhaps Raeburn, with whom he has many qualities in common, and both of whom at times reach truly great heights.

Most of what we know of Stuart's life we gain from Dunlap.² He was born near Newport, Rhode Island, on December 3, 1755. His early talents were such that a visiting Scottish artist, who had given him some instruction, took him to Scotland to study. In 1775 he again went abroad, this time to London. After a year there his compatriot Benjamin West accepted him as pupil and assistant. He soon exhibited in the Royal Academy, and within a few years had set himself up independently as a portrait painter. After a short time he left London for Ireland, where he remained for about five years.

In 1792 or 1793 he returned to America. It is said that the ambition to paint the president of the new republic had so fired his imagination that he could no longer remain abroad.

It was two or three years after his return, however, before he was able to accomplish his ambition, and then he who had been the familiar of nobility was so embarrassed in the awe-inspiring presence that he did not regard his first portrait as a success. He had spent a year in New York before going to Philadelphia, where he painted Washington, and where he remained for nearly ten years.

Stuart then spent about two years in Washington, and then removed to Boston, where he painted many portraits and took several pupils. He died there in 1828.

¹ Mantle Fielding, *Gilbert Stuart's Portraits of George Washington*, Philadelphia, 1923.

² William Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*.

A MAGNIFICENT GOTHIC TAPESTRY

WEAVING is one of the oldest arts known to man. Its protagonists sometimes go so far as to claim for it primacy over pottery. To which belongs the greater antiquity may always remain uncertain, and is of slight importance. Both were known to man in prehistoric times.

Through all the centuries of recorded history and in all parts of the world the craft of weaving has been cultivated in both its utilitarian and aesthetic aspects. It reached its highest artistic development in the form which we know as tapestry in the Gothic period,—in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and early sixteenth centuries.

Because tapestries are generally considered the finest of all weavings, many fabrics which are not really so are popularly called tapestry. The most notable of these is the Bayeux Tapestry,—really an embroidery. But the word tapestry strictly used, refers to a fabric into which a design has been woven by a specific technique. The warp threads are stretched upon the loom, and the design is secured by passing threads of the proper color alternately above and below the warp threads, thus weaving a small area of one color at one time. The weft does not, as in the weaving of an ordinary fabric, go completely across the warp, but the threads for each color area in the design stop at its outline. The weft threads are pushed down with a comb-like instrument so that the warp does not show. The threads ordinarily used in the weaving of tapestries are of wool, and the texture produced by the material and the method of weaving contributes much to their charm. But it is the simplicity and beauty of design which raises the best of them to the level of great art, for more often than not the technician has been so carried away with the possibilities of his material that he has produced very inferior results.

The method of tapestry weaving was discovered perhaps five thousand years ago. Dr. Ackerman¹ has pointed out that although no actual fabric of so early a date remains, tapestry is recorded in Egypt about 2900 B.C. For there appears painted on the walls of the mastaba of Hesy at Saqqara among other representations of textiles one so accurate as to leave no doubt that it reproduces a tapestry.

Thus tapestry appears very early, and reappears in Coptic textiles of near the beginning of the Christian Era, and again in Germany about 1200. This we know from fragments which exist today. Perhaps tapestries had been made in France in the ninth century,² but of this we cannot be certain, for there is no assurance



TAPESTRY—THE ENTOMBMENT

GIFT OF EDWARD

that the literary evidence refers to actual tapestry rather than to other fabrics to which the name was erroneously applied.

These very early medieval tapestries are of interest only to the scholar, however, for the connoisseur may never hope to possess one. But we are more fortunate when we come to the golden age of the art, for then the output was so great that despite the ravages of time and the carelessness which permitted the destruction of untold numbers, many still remain, not only in churches and museums, but in private and commercial hands.

The weaver's art has never surpassed the high peak which it reached in the great Apocalypse set of the Cathedral of Angers, which was ordered in 1377 and probably completed after 1414. But for a century after this famous series was completed tapestry art held to a high level. In this period the design of tapestries followed very closely that of paintings, as in fact it has ever since. There was



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JEAN FIERRET, ABOUT 1500

good reason that it should have done so, for there were jurisdictional disputes among the workmen then as now, and the painters' guild usually claimed and enforced the right to furnish the cartoons for all but the simplest designs. And it is not improbable that in the case of religious subjects the theologian dictated to the painter, at least in respect to the general scheme of the composition and the attributes and accessories of the personages.

Coming from near the end of this great Gothic period is the tapestry of the Entombment³ now installed in the Cloister of the Toledo Museum of Art as the gift of Edward Drummond Libbey.

In the center the figure of Christ lies on a bier of white marble veined with red. On the bier is the inscription *Humani Generis Redemptori*. Around it are grouped Joseph of Arimathea holding the crown of thorns, John, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, and Nicodemus. The last wears a brocaded hat, and a blue and gold

brocaded cloak with heavily fringed collar over a red coat. Joseph of Arimathea wears a blue cap wound with white, and a red and gold brocaded cloak over a blue tunic. Mary's cloak is blue, and her dress a red and white brocade. John wears a red cloak over a white robe and the Magdalen one of red over a dark green dress.

All are against a background of dark blue covered by flowers of many colors. Some have been identified as white asters, red and white daisies, violets, freesias, dianthus, calendulas, and strawberries. At the left and right are scrolls bearing the name de Mailly, and above the one J S and the other M S, monograms of two members of the family. At either end is a border representing alternating red and blue square-cut jewels bearing the monograms I H S of Jesus and M A of Mary, set in a heavy gold frame studded with smaller jewels.

In a remarkable state of preservation despite its four hundred years' existence, this is a most magnificent example of the weaver's art. It has the clear crisp design of an early Flemish painting. The colors are rich, deep and harmonious, appropriate to both design and material. The details are beautifully drawn. The deep emotion of the scene has not been lost. The workmanship fulfils the requirements of the material in that it confines itself to the representation of which tapestry is most capable and does not fall into the error of later days of becoming merely a painting in wool.

A few years ago it would have been impossible to name the designer of this tapestry. In fact, when it was exhibited at San Francisco in 1922, it was there catalogued as French of the end of the fifteenth century, probably woven in Touraine.⁴ But since then, as a result of extended research, the names of most of the important tapestry designers of the fifteenth century have been added to the incredibly short list previously available. This was accomplished by deciphering the decorative inscriptions found, with difficulty it is true, upon banners, the borders of garments, and in other obscure locations in the tapestries themselves.

Hence, by 1926, Dr. Ackerman was able to identify the designer of our tapestry as Jean Fierret,⁵ and to locate its place of production as probably Tournai,⁶ for she had found in reverse on the edge of Joseph of Arimathea's tunic the inscription I O N, one of the common spellings of Jean at the time. That the Jean in question was Jean Fierret was established by another inscription and the relation of the work so signed with that of Pierre Fierret, his father and teacher. Pierre had settled in Tournai by 1460, and Jean became his apprentice in 1496, and a Master of the Guild in 1500. Hence, place and date of weaving are established with reasonable probability.



DETAIL OF TAPESTRY OF THE ENTOMBMENT SHOWING SIGNATURE

In cataloging this tapestry for the San Francisco Exhibition, Dr. Ackerman said of it:⁴

"This tapestry is an unusually delicately and perfectly rendered example of the millefleurs aux personnages of the late Gothic period. A small piece like this was undoubtedly made for a private chapel, probably that of the de Mailly family. This quality of millefleurs was probably woven in Touraine. * * *

"The drawing has the nice exactness of a finished miniature, the workmanship the brilliance of enamel; yet both are transfigured by the vivid conception of the tragic event. Its utter pathos is expressed with moving power. We are in the presence of an unutterably solemn moment."

Her statement four years later, in the Chicago catalog,⁶ is equally enthusiastic:

"This is certainly one of the very great tapestries of the end of the Gothic period combining the solemn beauty of the theme, dramatically yet quietly expressed, with a richness and delicacy of decorative detail that exemplifies the supreme technical skill of this time."

¹ Ackerman, *Tapestry the Mirror of Civilization*, London, 1933. p. 2.

² Michel, *Histoire de l'Art*, III, i, p. 346.

³ DeMotte, *La Tapisserie Gothique*, Pls. 61 and 62 (in color).

⁴ Ackerman, *Catalog of the Retrospective Loan Exhibition of European Tapestries held in the San Francisco Museum of Art, 1922*. p. 31. Illus. Pl. 8.

⁵ Ackerman, *Recently Identified Designers of Gothic Tapestries*, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. VIII, No. 4, December, 1926. p. 153.

⁶ Ackerman, *Catalog of a Loan Exhibition of Gothic Tapestries*, *The Arts Club of Chicago*, December, 1926. p. 47. Illus. Frontispiece.



EARLY MORNING FISHING PARTY

HUGH MC KEAN

GIFT OF JOHN TIEDTKE

AN AMERICAN PAINTING

RECENTLY the Museum acquired as the gift of John Tiedtke, a canvas by the young American painter, Hugh McKean, titled Early Morning Fishing Party.

Tones of grey-blue, violet, and green are skilfully combined to suggest the early morning mists rising from the lowland, veiling the landscape and the figures. The fishing party carrying long, flexible poles crossing a marshy hill is painted with a fine sense of color and decorative value. The locale is Florida, where McKean attended Rollins College and now spends some of his time.

The artist is now just twenty-eight years of age. He studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the Art Students League and at the American Art School at Fontainebleau, France. At the latter place he received their highest award. He also received an award for the Best Picture in the Show at the Florida Federation of Fine Arts Exhibition in 1931. As yet not widely known, Hugh McKean has exhibited in New York and elsewhere with success.

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART NEWS

OUR SUMMER EXHIBITION

THE Toledo Museum takes pleasure in presenting during June, July, and August, its Twenty-Third Annual Exhibition of Paintings by Contemporary American Artists. In numbers the exhibition is neither larger nor smaller than those of recent years. Like them it has been kept within the confines of the space which the Museum has available for temporary showings and the policy which the Museum has set in respect to the display of all groups, both permanent and temporary, which demands that each work of art be segregated from its neighbor by unfilled space adequate to permit concentration upon a single object without distraction from over-nearness of others.

The Museum makes no claim that this is a comprehensive showing of all that is being done under the cloak of respectability which the name art confers. It is no mile of convases to confuse and bewilder, but rather a careful selection from the principal exhibitions and dealers' galleries, assembled in the hope that it may give both pleasure and inspiration.

We have never been protagonists of fads and fancies. We firmly believe that while it is the privilege, but not necessarily the duty, of the Museum to show all varieties of contemporary art, it should propagandize none of them. We must perforce exercise such critical faculties as we have been given and as have been developed by conscientious and open-minded study of all that comes to our doors and all that we may seek out.

We have but little patience with those who asperse the intellectual efforts, if not achievements, of this country with the statement that we are a young people. We all go back to the same Adam, and our American cultural roots are as firmly fixed in the soil of antiquity as those of any European country. The unbroken tradition of art cannot be claimed by planting the flag of any nation upon it.

American painters are making their contribution—and a goodly one—to the world's artistic history. We may not have produced a Manet or a Cezanne, but hundreds of Americans like hundreds of Europeans have learned from them, and yet have become no slavish copyists, but have each developed individuality, strength, vigor. The evidence is plain in the comparison of any of the great annual American exhibitions with those of Europe. Art transcends political divisions, whether they be the barriers of nature or the dotted lines drawn by man.

Times of depression and incipient recovery are periods of intense nationalism and sectionalism, evident in the readjustment of

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tariff barriers, money-monkeying, buy-at-home campaigns, and even in the almost unbelievable setting of qualifications of residence above ability in the employment of teachers. It is only to be expected that this ephemeral jockeying for position should manifest itself in art, and that Americans should Paint Native while Englishmen Buy British. Insofar as we consider it as a part of the passing show we can be amused and even applaud, but when we are asked to take it too seriously we can only deprecate and deplore.

Of course, art should not be too serious. Like the Sabbath, it was made for man, and not man for it. The automobile graveyard is as worthy of the painters' brush as the *fumiere*, but not more so. The wheatfield of Kansas is neither more characteristic nor parched than that of Spain. The caricature of the mansard and the gingerbread once so dear is evanescent, for the generation that knew them well will soon be gone, and their representation will not be humorous to those who never had the ambition to possess them. While they say the pug dog is coming back, the horsehair couch upon which he once wheezed his asthmatic way through life is re-appearing only on the painters' canvas.

There is hope in the passion of some painters for the unlovely. Perhaps their insistence upon our desecrations of our persons and our property may burn itself into our consciousness to the end that an aroused public will abhor the ugly, destroy the unseemly, and remove our refuse from the public gaze.

If this be so, a future generation may not regard some current paintings as great works of art, but may respect them for preaching the gospel of beauty through derision of disorder and invective against the unsightly.

Meanwhile the main stream of art rolls on, only mildly disturbed by eddies and whirlpools, growing in strength and breadth, flowing deeper and smoother, increased by many tributaries, ever more enriching the growing numbers who cluster beside it.

